

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Summer Food Service Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks served in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The [SFSP meal patterns](#) require 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch and supper. The meat/meat alternates component is optional at breakfast. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component may be served as one of the two required snack components.

For information on the SFSP meal patterns and the meat/meat alternates component, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) resource, [Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns](#), and visit the “[SFSP Meal Patterns](#)” and “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP](#)” sections of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.



To credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the SFSP meal patterns, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, deli meats, hotdogs, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. This documentation must be:

- an original Child Nutrition (CN) label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- a product formulation statement (PFS) signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the total weight of meat/meat alternates contained in one serving of the product.



For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the product’s CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 ounces of cooked chicken.

Commercial products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the SFSP meal patterns.

For more information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP](#). For additional guidance on documentation for commercial products, visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” section of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.

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The terms “protein” and “meat/meat alternate” are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. The USDA’s meal patterns require a specific amount of the meat/meat alternates component, not a specific amount of protein. Menu planners cannot use the grams of protein per serving listed on the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of the meat/meat alternates component in a product.

Serving Size

The serving sizes for the meat/meat alternates component refer to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish without added liquid, binders, and extenders (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Legumes in the SFSP](#));
- $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the SFSP](#)); and
- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA’s APP requirements (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the SFSP](#)).

One-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) ounce is the smallest amount that credits toward the meat/meat alternates component. If a menu item provides less than the full meal pattern serving of the meat/meat alternates component, the menu planner must include an additional meat/meat alternate to meet the full serving.

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The USDA recommends limiting processed meats and poultry (such as hot dogs, bologna, luncheon meat, pepperoni, and sausages) to no more than once per week.

Requirement for Recognizable Meat/Meat Alternates

The USDA requires that meat/meat alternates must be recognizable (visible) to credit toward the meat/meat alternates component. For example, SFSP sponsors cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie; soft tofu blended in a soup; or pureed beans in a muffin. The intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily identify the foods in CACFP menus. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping children recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

The USDA allows an exception to this requirement for yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies; and pasta made with 100 percent legume flours. Yogurt blended in smoothies credits as the meat/meat alternates component. Other meat/meat alternates, such as peanut butter, cannot credit when served in smoothies. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Smoothies in the SFSP](#).



Pasta made with 100 percent legume flours may credit as the meat/meat alternates component. The pasta must be offered with additional meat/meat alternates, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the SFSP](#).

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of meat/meat alternate foods to offer in SFSP menus; and modify foods and menus as appropriate. Examples of meat/meat alternates that may cause choking include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese.

Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods; and spreading nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the SFSP

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Accepting_Processed_Product_Documentation_SFSP.pdf

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CN_Labeling_Program.pdf

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Deli Meats in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Deli_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Foods in the SFSP ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents>

Crediting Legumes in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Legumes_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Nuts_Seeds_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Smoothies in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Smoothies_SFSP.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for the SFSP (CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program#MealPatterns>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#MMA>

Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/USDA_SFSP_NutritionGuide.pdf

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

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Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/APP_Requirements_SFSP.pdf

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Component_MMA_SFSP.pdf

Resources for the SFSP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/MealPattern/Resources_SFSP_Meal_Patterns.pdf

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<http://https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

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For more information, visit the [SFSP Meal Patterns](#) and [Crediting Foods in the SFSP](#) sections of the CSDE's SFSP webpage, or contact the [Summer Meals staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_MMA_SFSP.pdf

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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